



## Armando Wester makes Aruban and world history with the first Big Crossing

On Sunday, May 27, at approximately 12:50 PM, Armando Wester, proprietor of Kite Surfing Aruba raised his arm in triumph as he skimmed onto the Aruban shore: the first of eleven kite surfers to make the “Big Crossing” of the straits between Venezuela and Aruba.

Accompanied by Ryan Lampe on a windsurf board and about thirty small boats and yachts, the kite surfers departed from Puerto Escondido in on the north coast of Venezuela at noon and affected the crossing in just under two hours. A number of individuals have attempted to traverse this twelve-mile stretch of water, and in 1988 Aruban swimmer Roly Bislick was one of the few that was successful. Sunday was the first acknowledged attempt by either kite or windsurfers.

Armando Wester, organizer of the event along with Arusurf, the Aruba Surfing Association was first to make it to shore. Hassan Barakat, president of Arubsurf followed the kite surfers in a speed boat and was waiting with open arms to embrace Armando as he finished the race with a flourish of kite surfing bravado for the spectators. Coming in second was eighteen-year-old Maki Wiggins, with proud parents Aki and Marcus anxiously awaiting his arrival.

Armando had estimated that it would perhaps take two and one half hours to make the crossing, but favorable winds shortened the journey, which started late. They quickly reached the shores of Aruba in the area of the Valero Refinery, but then the real battle against the winds began, and upon reaching Punta Brabo, by the Manchebo Point, they found “the light winds made them work hard” to reach the finish line at Fisherman’s Huts. A number deemed this perhaps the toughest leg of the journey, as evidenced by the many tacks and jibes that Armando was seen to take to get to shore..

Following on the heels of Armando and Maki was Lysander Loefsok in third place and Ryan Lampe on his windsurf board. Then came Monique Venema, one of the two women to participate, along with Manou Becker.

The day finished with an after party at Moomba Beach Bar and Restaurant, during which trophies and prizes of fine quality kite surfing equipment were awarded, and a great deal of Polar Beer Light from TEC Distributors, official sponsors of the event, was consumed.

Congratulations to Armando and the others from the staff of THE NEWS for making a successful crossing and Aruban and world sport history!